

at Annapolis very much, though Allan was studying very hard in preparation for taking the examination for 1st Lieutenant.

After this assignment they were stationed at Long Beach. If Allan was scheduled for sea duty for several months, this was when Irma and Babs would take a trip back to Nebraska to see mother and dad and Judge Blackledge (Allen's mother had developed severe Asthma and died on September 17, 1920). Or Irma and Babs would come in to Los Angeles to stay part of the time with the Gilhams, or Bill and I or out to San Fernando with the Wilmots.

One time when Irma and Barbara were visiting the folks at Red Cloud, when Babs was about three years old, she was quite fascinated with our big back yard. She loved the double swing, the vegetable garden, the apple tree and feeding the few chickens in their little pen. She liked watering the plants and flowers and was doing this when dad came home. He headed for the swing under the shady Maple tree, for it was a nice cool spot on a hot day. He called "hello" to Babs, which surprised her. She turned and the hose turned with her thoroughly wetting her Grandfather. When she came back to Los Angeles she told me her Grandpa Ranney didn't have to go to the market for his vegetables. He just dug them up in his backyard.

It was while they were in Long Beach that Allan had a change of orders and Allan was again assigned to Annapolis as an Instructor at the Naval Academy, and was given a months leave to get there, this coincided with mother and dad's first trip to California. We had several gatherings and it was at my home that Allan, Jima and Babs came to say goodbye, for they were ready to start their trip by car to Annapolis. They planned to go to Red Cloud, and dad gave Irma a key to the house, to use while they were there. Irma said, "It will seem mighty funny to be there without you and mother too". Those were prophetic words for she would never see her home again. The first tragedy of our family struck when they were in about the center of Wyoming. The back wheels of their car locked, the car was turned over instantly killing Irma. Allan was knocked unconscious, covered with black and blue marks and wounds. Four year old Barbara was not hurt at all, and was found by passing motorists, running about trying to awaken her mother and dad. Allan and Babs were taken to a hospital in Laramie. The nurses were so good to Babs. They fixed her a little nursing cap and let her play nurse, taking care of her daddy.

When the Message of the tragedy was received by Dr. Wilmot, it was decided that mother and dad would terminate their vacation and go to Laramie to take Irma's body, Babs and Allen home to Red Cloud, and that I should go too. For Babs knew me better than anyone, and it would be too much for the folks to handle alone. I think that train ride was the saddest experience of my life. As I write this 50 years later tears stop me,

The Doctor did not want to release Allan from the Hospital. He had no broken bones but was so bruised and lame he could hardly walk. We did

get home and Allan was put to bed to recuperate. All the way on the train Babs was asking me if I would be her mother. I told her I would be her mother, and all of my sisters would be her mother and that she would always have a mother. A few days later she asked me where her mother was. I